



Quotes

Designation of Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, May 5, 2014

Dan Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

"National wildlife refuges are the best of America's wild places, but many are not near major metropolitan areas. Most Americans have grown up without a real connection to the outdoors and wildlife, and the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative gives us a chance to change that. We believe these unique urban partnerships can inspire the imagination and create a connected conservation constituency of people who are aware, understand and support fish and wildlife conservation."

U.S. Senator Jack Reed, Rhode Island

"I am pleased Rhode Island's application was chosen for this competitive award and I applaud the Fish and Wildlife Service for its commitment to connecting more kids to nature. Providence is a bustling city with a diverse population and a diverse park system. This federal Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership Project funding will help boost recreation and environmental education opportunities for residents, particularly young people."

U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Rhode Island

"Parks and wildlife refuges are assets to our towns and cities. Providing access to open spaces and wildlife ensures healthier communities and helps young Rhode Islanders develop an appreciation for the environment. This refuge designation will help coordinate local involvement in environmental protection and create a sustainable urban ecosystem for future generations to enjoy."

U. S. Congressman James Langevin, Rhode Island

"If we truly want to promote a message of conservation and environmental protection, education and awareness must begin with our young people, and what better classroom is there than the many parks and urban greenspaces that make our cities more beautiful? Rhode Island has so many natural assets, and the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership will serve to further enhance our state's beautiful landscape."

Governor Lincoln D. Chafee, Rhode Island

"We have a long tradition in Rhode Island of valuing stewardship and preservation of our state's natural resources. I am so pleased to see this commitment continue with the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, which will open up new environmental educational opportunities and connect our urban youth with our state's beautiful parks and wildlife refuges."

Mayor Angel Taveras, Providence, Rhode Island

"I am proud that Providence has been selected to participate in the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership Project. This program will be a tremendous asset to our neighborhoods as it will connect city youth with expanded opportunities for recreation, enhance learning programs and promote our green spaces."

Robert McMahon, Superintendent, Providence Parks and Recreation Department

"The Urban Wildlife Partnership will be a catalyst to help Providence residents connect with the natural land and water habitats in our city parks. We are very grateful that Providence has been selected to participate in this program!"

Charlie Vandemoer, Project Leader, Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

"The opportunities to help our children gain an appreciation for our fish and wildlife heritage, which our partners have created through this initiative, is truly exciting, and we very much appreciate their efforts, their passion, and their commitment."

Wendy Nilsson, Director, Partnership for Providence Parks

"This partnership is about more than conservation... it is about strengthening and celebrating our natural resources by supporting and promoting the work of dedicated residents, volunteers and community partners."

Janet Coit, Director, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)

“This Partnership is so exciting and consequential. Exposing young people to the wonders and complexity of nature opens up new career opportunities and enriches both students and teachers. Rhode Islanders are fortunate that the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service is devoted to connecting urban populations to the rivers and small wild areas nearby and accessible to all. DEM is so grateful to be part of this partnership with the Service and the City, one which will grow and evolve and is sure to create future environmental leaders.”

April Alix, Conservation Program Coordinator, Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

“Each of our parks are very unique. Many are looking for help with habitat restoration, trail maintenance and interpretive signage as well as enhancing their environmental education programming within the parks. I find it inspiring to work as a liaison between the local conservation organizations and the parks’ friends groups in hopes of collaborating on events and hands-on nature programs. This will be a collective conservation message to the urban communities of Providence, one of the most diverse cities in the country.”

Jeremy Goodman, Executive Director, DVM, Roger Williams Park Zoo

“Roger Williams Park Zoo is thrilled to be a part of the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership. Through this opportunity, we will be able to engage 10 Providence teachers in hands-on field conservation efforts involving the endangered American burying beetle and the rare New England cottontail rabbit. Not only will this profoundly impact these 10 teachers in their teaching of science, but it will also expose all of their students to wildlife they might not know exists in their own backyards.”

Terry Sullivan, Director, The Nature Conservancy, Rhode Island

“The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island is proud to join this exciting new initiative led by the Partnership for Providence Parks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The collaborative effort provides us a terrific opportunity to build new relationships, bring the Conservancy’s conservation efforts to new audiences, and most importantly, help the children of Providence see that nature is not a far-away place, but right in their neighborhood.”

“We are committed to providing technical assistance and on-the-ground leadership for habitat restoration projects at the priority parks that have been identified by the Partnership. The Conservancy’s stewardship staff have expertise in habitat restoration project management, trail development, as well as interpretive sign design. We are more than happy to join this effort as a partner in the community.”

Larry Taft, Executive Director, Audubon Society of Rhode Island

“Audubon is excited for the opportunity to bring our summer camp program to Providence’s Neutaconkanut Hill Park. Since launching our Urban Naturalist after school program five years ago, we have been looking for a way to bring Audubon summer camp to Providence. Engaging urban youth in their local environment is important to Audubon’s mission. The Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership has been the catalyst to help make this a reality.”

Elli Panichas, Executive Director, Neutaconkanut Hill Conservancy

The mission of the Neutaconkanut Hill Conservancy (NHC) is to preserve this unique historical forestland – in perpetuity. This, of course, is an on-going project, and can only be done by creating new stewards to the Hill. Bring in the school children! The Urban Initiative has been invaluable in joining with NHC to strengthen our educational relationships and programs with schools - elementary through high school - in the neighborhood and throughout the Capital City of Providence.

Children become the educators to parents, friends - people of all ages, who pass it on – each population with the possibility of bringing others to the Hill, has, and, will continue to, re-generated this urban forest. It is not only education to the value of conservancy and nature, it is also making the population healthier, physically and mentally. And, it is creating a new generation of stewards to and for the Great Hill of Neutaconkanut.

Jane Peterson, President, Blackstone Park Conservancy

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service came to our aid just the right time. The Blackstone Parks Conservancy had recently launched an education outreach program with potential to attract more families to the beautiful, yet little known 45-acre conservation district overlooking the Seekonk River. Here was an opportunity to generate excitement over learning about nature, but we lacked some of the tools. The Service gave in abundance the practical assistance and encouragement that we needed, for which we are very grateful.”

Kelly Barr, 4th Grade Teacher, Paul Cuffee School, Providence, Rhode Island

“Working with April and the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership has been spectacular. It is exactly what our community needs – someone to help tie together all the pieces that make a community strong, and offering those people and organizations support. My students felt so empowered when April came in to hear about their passion for the ill. April and the Partnership are empowering our youth to take care of our planet! What’s better than that?”